

Question Time Event -26 January 2012

Pest Control

- Has a fully funded pest control service been costed and if so how much would it be?
- Why does it take so long for the council to deal with complaints about pest control (regarding neighbours and neighbouring businesses)? This process is far too slow and by the time anything is done the problem has escalated further. A quicker response would lead to a saving of money that could be spent elsewhere?

Car Parking

- What are the capital costs associated with the implementation of standardized parking charges and how will these be funded?
- How much per year will Northampton Borough Council lose in car parking income after its deal with Legal and General is completed? Am I right in thinking it is such a high figure that it would pay for the Borough Council's yearly contribution to PCSOs fifteen time over? What other services will need to be cut from the budget in future years to pay for this?

Councillor Empowerment Fund

- The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Scrutiny Panel 3) Report issued December 2011, recommends in Section 6.1.1 that the proposed councillor empowerment fund be limited to £1500 per member, a figure in agreement with the recommendation of the Cabinet Member for Finance (as noted in the Key Findings on Page 4). It should be also noted that Kettering BC only awards only £625 per member and other councils surveyed by the committee have cancelled similar schemes due to budget constraints. Can the Cabinet explain, how in this time of extreme budget pressure, this discretionary fund, no matter how well intentioned came to be doubled at the expense of other services of great public value and whether the current proposed figure of £3000 per member will be reviewed to allow re-allocation of funds to areas of more pressing need

PCSO's

- Does the Council understand the role that PCSOs perform?
- Has the Council consulted the majority of the general public and local businesses as to how they think the cuts to PCSOs may affect them?
- Why is the Council retaining resource in other departments whilst it is reducing funding to support PCSOs who could fulfil broader roles? Cabinet members have acknowledged the excellent work of the PCSO's in the community of Rectory Farm and other areas of Northampton, and have stated that they support the continuation of the service but are unwilling to provide any funding as they have been doing for the past few years. The County Council is also withdrawing its funding at the same time, while the Police Authority has declined to fill the funding gap, threatening the loss of PCSOs from communities like Rectory Farm.
- Can the Cabinet provide assurances to the people of Rectory Farm that meaningful discussions have been held or will be held before the budgets for

all three bodies currently funding PCSOs are finalised, to resolve what appears from the public view to be a stand-off between the two Councils and the Police Authority.

- What consideration has the Cabinet given to the fact that there will be an elected leader of the Police installed during the coming financial year who may well have a completely different outlook on the need for Police funding of the PCSOs than the current Police administration. Therefore, PCSOs positions which are likely to be made redundant in the next couple of months at a cost to the taxpayer would have to be recruited and trained again only a few months later at a further cost to the taxpayer?
- What consideration has the Cabinet given to the possibility of reducing funding gradually over e.g. 2-3 years, rather than eliminating it totally in one fell swoop thus allowing continued negotiation between the Councils and the Police but ultimately achieving the Cabinet's aim of transition of PCSO funding to the Police.
- What consideration has the Cabinet given to reducing other discretionary items in the budget such as the proposed Councillor Empowerment Fund in order to achieve a slower reduction in the PCSO funding. For example: The CEF is proposed at £3000 per councillor. $45 \times 3000 = £135000$ Reverting the CEF to £1500 per member as was originally proposed by the Finance Portfolio Holder, would release £67500. This would be good a starting point from which to negotiate PCSO funding with the NPA & NCC.

CCTV

- A large number of cameras in the Borough are Pan Tilt Zoom (PTZ) cameras which are designed for live monitoring and control by trained Control Room Operators. Cabinet propose to reduce the number of CCTV Control Room Operators by half on certain nights. This is particularly critical as one operator will only be able to give his or her full attention to supporting the Police in one unfolding incident at a time.
- What specialist CCTV advice (if any) has been sought and what analysis has been done on the projected workload of the control room operators to determine whether they may for example, be called upon more often to support the Police in managing incidents following the proposed reduction in PCSO numbers. Northamptonshire County Council have switched off many street lights in the Borough of Northampton resulting in many areas of darkness and extremely uneven illumination where any lights have been retained. In order to provide pictures of suitable standard for live viewing by operators and for recording for possible admission as evidence in court, CCTV cameras must be provided with a good level of visible or Infra-Red illumination distributed evenly in the scene being viewed.
- What review (if any) has been done to determine the effect of the changes in light distribution on the performance of the CCTV cameras since the street-lights have been switched off to ensure that cameras are providing pictures of suitable quality and therefore an acceptable return on investment.
- What will be done to address issues where lighting is inadequate for CCTV and ineffective cameras are therefore racking up running and maintenance cost?

- After the recent news of location change of the skate park planned to open this year, where does the Council plan to source the extra £40,000 per year needed for CCTV at the new skate park location? As previous location was more suitable, has an existing camera and is clearly visible from the main road.

Other Questions:

- Is this consultation another tick box exercise that will not be listened to?
- How will the Council offset the impact of Government policy changes impacting on those less well off?
- Why has LED technology not been rolled out fully within the council owned buildings?
- Why is my Council Tax so high? (I live in a small bungalow)
- Can the council confirm or deny it is considering the withdrawal of the 20% discretionary rate relief if gives to voluntary organisations? if so, will community centres be exempt and, if not, will the relief be reduced at a rate of 5% per annum or all in one go? The business plans submitted to NBC by CSN did not allow for this extra potential £4,000 of expenditure, as we were unaware of this extra cost.
- When is NBC going to tackle the great number of empty office units which are in the town centre, several of which have been empty for over 20 years or more?
- It seems the bus station consultation has not been given longer timeframe nor taken to much wider communities or areas in consideration and the whole process is based on self driven political agenda. Why are we or Northampton council taxpayers denied this?
- What's the point of knocking down the bus station to make way for new shops when we already have loads of empty shops in the town?
- Some Community Centres have been, or are in the process of being, transferred to community groups or parish councils. The Borough Council spends a lot of money on maintaining the smaller parks and public open spaces with no hope of any return income to offset against the costs. Has any consideration been given to transferring these to parish councils and community groups who could maintain them at far lower cost. And if not, why not?
- Is the Council planning to sell its housing stock (including sheltered accommodation) within the next 4 years? If so, will consultation be carried out to ensure all views are considered? Also, in relation to future rent levels, what will be the anticipated increases in real terms? What steps will the Council take to safeguard the need of vulnerable individuals in sheltered accommodation now or those due to access sheltered accommodation within the next 4 years?
- Please can you tell me when money will be available to carry out essential health and safety works to my mother's bungalow?
- Provision of information in accessible formats-Some of the information was too complex for people to understand
- Will NBC look at outsourcing other services?
- Concerns regarding the vulnerability of women park rangers
- Future of sheltered housing and rents